

# ISLAM, GENDER, CULTURE, AND DEMOCRACY

## *Introduction*

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This collection of articles presents findings from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Values Surveys (EVS). These surveys cover 78 societies, containing over 80 percent of the world's population; they extend over the full range of cross-national variation, including societies with per capita incomes as low as \$300 per year, ranging up to societies with per capita incomes of more than \$35,000 per year; and long-established democracies with market economies, as well as authoritarian states and ex-socialist states. These surveys make it possible to compare the values and beliefs of people in every major cultural region of the world, and they reveal large and coherent cross-national differences in what people want out of life.

The World Values Surveys grew out of a study launched by the European Values Survey group (EVS), which carried out surveys in ten West European societies in 1981; this project evoked such widespread interest that it was replicated in 14 additional countries. Findings from these surveys suggested that predictable cultural changes were taking place. To monitor possible changes, a new wave of surveys was carried out in 1990-91, building on findings from the first wave, but this time designed to be carried out globally. Successive waves of surveys were carried out in 1995-96 and 1999-2001. In every case, we work with colleagues from the given society, and in most cases these surveys are supported by internal funding.

The first three waves of these surveys covered most of the world's major cultural zones except for Africa and the Islamic region, where we were able to carry out only a few surveys in each region. In planning the fourth wave, the World Values Survey Association set a high priority on attaining substantially better coverage of these regions; and the 2000-2001 WVS includes eight African countries and ten predominantly Islamic societies (including three overlapping cases). As a result, we have an unprecedentedly broad range of Islamic societies, extending from Morocco to Indonesia, and this volume includes two articles analyzing Islamic worldviews. Another set of articles focuses on the relationship between culture and democratic institutions; and still another set of articles analyzes the changing role of gender in society—with considerable overlap between the three groups, providing an overall theme of *Islam, Gender, Culture, and Democracy*.

### **An Overview of Findings**

The first three articles deal with the relationship between Islam and democracy. Interestingly, all three writers reach the same conclusion: that the Islamic religion

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is not, in itself, a significant barrier to the emergence of democratic institutions.

Mark Tessler inquires whether Islamic orientations help account for the fact that—despite the global trend toward democracy—not a single Arab country qualifies as an electoral democracy. Evidence from the World Values Survey indicates that Islam does not discourage the emergence of attitudes favorable to democracy. He finds little evidence, at least at the individual level of analysis, to support the claims of those who assert that Islam and democracy are incompatible. The reasons that democracy has not taken root in the Arab world must therefore lie elsewhere, perhaps in domestic economic structures, perhaps in relations with the international political and economic order, or perhaps in the determination of those in power to resist political change by whatever means are required.

Farooq Tanwir examines the implications of the fact that in October 2002, for the first time in Pakistan's history, a sizeable share of the population voted for religious parties. Many analysts interpret this as signaling the rise of a major fundamentalist religious movement. He suggests, that in large part, this phenomenon can be viewed as a protest vote, rebuking the major political parties' failure to provide solutions to Pakistan's poverty and misery. He finds that the Pakistani public attaches strong importance to religion and believes that its political leaders should believe in God. But a strong majority—fully 74 percent—rejects the idea that religious leaders should influence how people vote in elections. The Pakistanis are Islamic—but they do not want to be ruled by religious leaders.

Fares al-Braizat tests Fukuyama's claim that Islam is resistant to modernity (as indicated by liberal democracy and capitalism). His empirical test indicates that Islam does not seem to play a significant role in explaining democracy/authoritarianism. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of human development and the political opportunity structure in explaining whether a society is authoritarian or democratic.

Two decades ago, the authors of *Political Action* predicted that “unconventional political participation” would become more widespread throughout advanced industrial societies, because it was part of a deep-rooted intergenerational change. Ronald Inglehart and Gabriela Catterberg and examine subsequent trends in political action. Time series data demonstrate that the predicted change has taken place—to such an extent that petitions, boycotts, and other forms of direct action are no longer unconventional but have become more or less normal actions for a large part of the citizenry of post-industrial societies. This type of elite-challenging actions also played an important part in the Third Wave of democratization—but after the transition to democracy, most of the new democracies saw a decline in direct political action. They interpret this decline as a “post-honeymoon” period effect; in the long run, they expect that elite-challenging activity will move on an upward trajectory in most of the new democracies, as it has in virtually all established democracies.

Christian Welzel demonstrates that low corruption and high female representation among elites go together, and help make formal democracy increas-

ingly effective. But the quality of elites is not an independent phenomenon. It is shaped by an underlying mass factor: rising self-expression values that shift cultural norms toward greater emphasis on responsive and inclusive elites. These self-expression values, in turn, are favored by economic development. These three components are linked through the logic of Human Development: (1) human resources, (2) self-expression values, (3) elite quality, and (4) effective democracy—all of which help to widen the scope of human choice.

Alejandro Moreno and Patricia Méndez examine attitudes toward democracy in Mexico, which finally made the transition to democracy in 2000. They find that the prevailing political culture in Mexico expresses comparatively low support for democracy, relatively high support for non-democratic government, low interpersonal trust, low levels of tolerance, and a strong emphasis on deference. Changes over time indicate that Mexicans have reinforced both democratic and non-democratic values in recent years: it would be premature to conclude that Mexico now has a stably pro-democratic political culture.

Renata Sieminska asks, “Are generational changes taking place in democratic attitudes in political values in long-established democratic countries, and ex-communist societies?” She finds that changes are taking place that tend to make the societies of the new democracies increasingly similar to those of the old democracies. Particularly large changes are occurring in Poland, where the youngest generation differs greatly from the older ones.

Previous research has found that men and women have similar levels of happiness in terms of life satisfaction. Ronald Inglehart demonstrates that significant gender-related differences in subjective well-being exist—but tend to be concealed by an interaction effect between age, gender, and well-being. Women under 45 tend to be happier than men; but older women tend to be *less* happy. The aspiration-adjustment model implies that despite their continuing disadvantages in income, status, and power, women today should show higher levels of subjective well-being than men. A global women’s movement has been pushing for gender equality throughout the world, with some success, so that women’s current achievement tends to be above traditional aspiration levels. But this is offset by a systematic tendency to devalue older women. This tendency is particularly strong in advanced industrial societies where women have made the most progress—but where the mass media and advertising convey the message that only young women are beautiful and devalue the social worth of older women.

Pradeep Chhibber examines the reasons why women in India do not participate in political life to the same extent as men. While a fair number of women turn out to vote, women have little representation in legislative bodies. He attributes the limited presence of women in legislative bodies to the fact that many women are still confined to the household. Even after controlling for demographic factors, only those women who have an identity that is independent of the household are likely to run for office. Similar patterns exist globally: women who have identities outside the household are most likely to be politically active.

### Acknowledgements

For many of the countries examined here, the 2000-2001 WVS was the first time that their society had been included in a cross-national survey (and in some cases, such as that of Vietnam, the World Values Survey was the first representative national survey *ever* carried out in that country). We are grateful to the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, the Swedish Agency for International Development, and the U.S. National Science Foundation for making these surveys possible.

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For more information about the World Values Survey, see the WVS web sites <http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/> and <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.com>. The European

surveys used here were gathered by the European Values Survey group (EVS). For detailed EVS findings, see Loek Halman, *The European Values Study: A Sourcebook Based on the 1999/2000 European Values Study Surveys*. Tilburg: EVS, 2001. For more information, see the EVS website, <http://evs.kub.nl>.